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C O N F I D E N T I A L THE HAGUE 000671

SENSITIVE
NOFORN
SIPDIS

EUR/UMB FOR JOE WANG
EUR/ERA FOR RACHEL WOLFE

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [NL](#) [BO](#) [EU](#)
SUBJECT: NETHERLANDS/BELARUS: SUPPORTING CONTINUED SANCTIONS

REF: A. STATE 112644
[1](#)B. THE HAGUE 270
[1](#)C. THE HAGUE 135

Classified By: PolEcon Counselor Andrew C. Mann for reasons 1.5(b,d)

[1](#)1. (C/NF) SUMMARY: The Dutch support a "double rollover" of EU sanctions and travel restrictions for Belarus but are not optimistic about the EU supporting their view. The Dutch openness to compromise on Belarus may reflect concern about the Netherlands' image among member states. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (C) DUTCH VIEW: Post delivered reftel A points to MFA contacts on EU and Eastern Europe. Carola van Rijnsoever, EU Correspondent, told Post the Netherlands prefers to continued sanctions. The Dutch agree with the U.S. assessment of Belarus. "There hasn't been much change in Belarus" and reforms are "going very slowly." Nonetheless, the Dutch are "flexible" and will work to achieve consensus.

[1](#)3. (C/NF) EU DISCUSSIONS: Van Rijnsoever said the EU did not appear to favor continuing sanctions over the long term. There is a possibility that the EU could temporarily extend the visa restrictions and sanctions policies -- set to expire in March and November respectively -- to ensure the EU considers both the policies at the same time in the future. This would provide a short term benefit of extending the policies but make it harder to win EU support for continuing the policies during future deliberations. Van Rijnsoever also noted the United Kingdom, while supporting a "double rollover" in meetings on November 3, was not "overly enthusiastic."

[1](#)4. (C/NF) COMMENT: Asked whether the Dutch approach -- supporting compromise on a human rights debate -- reflected concern about the Netherlands' image among EU member states, Van Rijnsoever said she had not heard any explicit statements to that effect. Post reads this response as an acknowledgment that criticism of the Dutch hard-line stances, on Serbia for example, have prompted them to take a more pragmatic and flexible approach on other human rights issues.
LEVIN